

2023 Worcester County Public Schools
Blueprint Implementation Plan
Recommendation for Approval

Local Education Agency	Worcester County Public Schools
Date of Approval	

The Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) staff has completed its review of Worcester County’s Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan, including all revisions made in response to requests by the AIB and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). AIB staff has determined that the revised version of Worcester’s initial implementation plan meets the Criteria for Success and is recommending it to the Board for **approval. With the Board’s approval of the plan, FY 2024 Blueprint funds automatically withheld pending AIB approval of the LEA’s plan will be authorized for release by MSDE in accordance with the Blueprint law.**

Review Process

Each local education agency (LEA) was required to submit its Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan to the AIB and MSDE concurrently on March 15, 2023. Immediately following their submission, AIB staff reviewed them to determine if they met the minimum requirements established in the AIB’s Initial Blueprint Comprehensive Plan, including responding to all questions in the template and staying within the 98 page maximum length (excluding the template). In April 2023, the AIB determined that all LEA plans met the minimum requirements and, in accordance with statute, FY 2023 Blueprint funds were authorized for release by MSDE.

MSDE and AIB staff then conducted separate evaluations of each of the 24 LEA plans to determine if they met the Criteria for Success. For AIB’s review, AIB staff and consultants, as well as Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee staff, served as reviewers of both LEA implementation plans and Career Counseling MOUs. Each reviewer was assigned to read pillar-specific sections of individual LEA plans and some reviewers read and evaluated entire implementation plans. Ultimately, every section of each LEA plan was evaluated by two different reviewers for AIB who consolidated their feedback to inform their final decision of whether each criterion in the Criteria for Success was met.

MSDE’s review process is described in the memo hyperlinked below. MSDE provided up to two rounds of feedback with requests for revisions to LEAs before sending their recommended plans for approval in two groups to the AIB between May 16 and June 6, 2023. AIB staff reviewed the LEA revised plans and, if applicable, identified additional responses requiring revisions based on one or more of the following criteria:

- The response did not adequately or entirely address the associated criterion in the Criteria for Success;
- The response did not adequately or entirely address a requirement for implementation identified in the Initial Blueprint Comprehensive Implementation Plan; or
- The response did not adequately or entirely address a statutory requirement.

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AIB staff requested revised responses from LEAs as applicable over two rounds of feedback provided between May 25 and June 20, 2023. AIB staff provided additional technical assistance including numerous office hour sessions to assist LEAs with their revisions. Each revised LEA response was re-evaluated against the appropriate criterion to determine if the revisions met the requirements. Once all revised responses were reviewed and determined to meet the requirements, the LEA's revised plan was ready to be recommended to the Board for approval.

In addition, AIB staff/ consultants and CTE Committee staff reviewed the Career Counseling MOUs that LEAs, local workforce development boards, and community colleges submitted with each LEA plan and subsequent versions. The review criteria included meeting the requirements in the Blueprint law and the guidance provided by AIB and MSDE. Staff provided feedback to each county and requested revisions to the MOUs as applicable on June 5, with rolling deadlines in June and July for submitting and re-submitting revised MOUs until they meet the requirements.

Plan Materials

Worcester County's plan submitted to the Board for approval includes the materials listed below:

- [2023 Blueprint Implementation Plan](#)—the original plan submitted by the LEA in March 2023, including a draft Career Counseling MOU if available.
- [AIB Feedback](#)—the request(s) for revisions from AIB staff sent to the LEA and the LEA's revised response(s) based on this feedback.
- MSDE [Memo](#) and [Feedback](#)—the request(s) for revision from MSDE staff sent to the LEA and the LEA's revised response(s) based on this feedback. (NOTE: Some LEAs received two rounds of feedback. In this case, the feedback round is noted in the document's title.)
- [Feedback on Career Counseling Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#)—feedback provided to LEAs on the initial and revised versions of the Career Counseling MOU.
- [Career Counseling MOU](#)—most recent version of the LEA's MOU.

Once the Board has approved LEA plans, LEAs will submit their final 2023 implementation plans to AIB that reflect the approved revisions they submitted to both MSDE and AIB. This final version will be posted on the AIB website, including a Spanish translation version when available. Final Career Counseling MOUs will also be posted on the AIB website.

AIB Feedback

During the review process, AIB reviewers identified numerous areas of strength and opportunities for improvement in each LEA plan. A summary of the highlights are provided below. Additional feedback will be provided to LEAs as part of ongoing technical assistance to support LEAs as they implement their 2023 plans and develop their five-year plans for submission in 2024.

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Areas of Strength and Opportunity	• Worcester County outlines a comprehensive set of strategies to increase pre-K enrollment that includes expanding door-to-door recruitment and administering surveys to families of kindergarten students to determine why they may not have attended a pre-K program. They have deeply considered both short- and long-term operational changes necessary to support pre-K expansion. The LEA also employs an early childhood special educator who provides on-demand coaching and support to private providers on the delivery of special education services. • Worcester describes a coherent plan for ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development that includes elbow-to-elbow coaching sessions with consultants; virtual training sessions; regularly scheduled professional learning communities (PLCs); and ongoing student-centered coaching cycles provided by instructional coaches. Notably, Worcester has established an ELA Committee that norms collaboratively using exemplars of student work to ensure consistency in grading across the district. The LEA's plan does not identify a similar committee for mathematics or other subject areas; WCPS may consider developing additional committees if they are not in place. • Worcester is creating an intervention handbook for Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention programs for K-12 that will identify the intensity, duration, data to qualify, and data to exit so that all students can receive targeted interventions for critical content at each grade level. • AIB and CTE Committee staff have reviewed and approved Worcester County's career counseling MOU. The specific feedback provided to Worcester throughout the review process is available through the MOU feedback form linked above.
Areas for Further Growth and Improvement	• While Worcester's plan provides detail on the ways educators are being informed about the National Board Certification (NBC) opportunity and highlights salary increases for NBC teachers built into the Blueprint, it may also consider developing additional district-specific supports for teachers to pursue NBC. As Worcester notes in its plan, there is a misalignment between the racial diversity of the district's student population and NBC teachers. Worcester commits to working with its Coordinator of Equity and Multicultural Education to support the LEA in uncovering barriers for teachers in pursuing NBC and addressing these obstacles moving forward. • At the time of the implementation plan's submission, WCPS was developing a comprehensive literacy plan aligned with the Blueprint's intent that was projected to be completed by June 2023. WCPS has not yet adopted a comprehensive math plan. The LEA noted that in 2019, the district's coordinator and coaches drafted a comprehensive plan and are currently revising it to align with the goals of the Blueprint, with an anticipated completion date of August 2023. • Worcester's plan provides great detail on its current use of funds to support multilingual learners. While it provides some initial thoughts about what it could do differently in the future, it would be helpful to see more specificity around these

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	potential strategies for increasing its investments and reallocating staff and resources to improve the education of EL students.
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